

Governor's Comprehensive Plan for California's Water Future

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Department of Water Resources

Last year, the Governor and Legislature initiated the first phase of a comprehensive Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) to address California's critical infrastructure needs. In November 2006, the voters approved the first installment of that vision to rebuild California. But efforts to ensure a reliable water supply for all Californians cannot end with those measures.

There are many stressors in the Delta including seismic risk, invasive species, water quality issues, and loss of habitat due to urban encroachment. Recent court decisions to limit pumping in the Delta are further evidence that the Delta is in crisis. It is time to move forward with a comprehensive fix, and pursue adaptive management of the Delta and all water supplies.

Climate change must also be considered in planning for future water needs. Current trends and climate models suggest a loss of at least a quarter of the snowmelt runoff by 2050. Warmer weather would ultimately mean more flooding in the winter, and less runoff from snow. With greater conservation measures and by expanding the state's water management and delivery system, including surface storage, groundwater storage and conveyance facilities, California can prepare for these changes.

New Investments in Surface and Groundwater Storage

Development of additional storage could provide additional water for California families, farms and businesses. Benefits include better flood protection, water for fisheries management and wildlife refuges, and improvements in drinking water quality. Three potential sites are under consideration: Sites Reservoir in Colusa County, Los Vaqueros expansion project in Contra Costa County, and Temperance Flat Reservoir in Fresno County. The governor's plan also proposes funds for new investments to increase and improve groundwater storage.

New Investments for Delta Sustainability and Water Supply Reliability

The governor's plan recognizes the need for a sustainable resource management plan for the Delta - a unique natural resource, prime recreational and cultural destination, as well as California's most significant source of

drinking and agricultural water. However, scientists have affirmed that the current health of the Delta's ecosystem and its use as a reliable water conveyance corridor are not sustainable over the long-term.

Recent findings suggest a two in three chance of catastrophic flooding in or near the Delta in the next 50 years due to earthquakes or storms. An earthquake could liquefy the foundations of Delta levees. Major highway corridors could be inundated. Intrusion of salt water in the Delta would shut down the Central Valley and State Water Projects for months and cause long-term reduction in water quality when service was resumed. The economy of California and the nation would suffer major negative impacts.

New investments are needed for a long-term, sustainable resource management plan for the Delta that will protect the environment while ensuring reliable water deliveries to families, farms and businesses.

New Investments for Water Conservation

The Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program encourages regional strategies to protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and reduce dependence on imported water. The proposed plan would target additional investments for water conservation grants to local communities to yield additional water, protect water quality, conserve energy, reduce urban and agricultural runoff, and reduce urban effluent.

New Investments for Water Resources Stewardship

The plan proposes funding to help support vital natural resources projects including Klamath River, Salton Sea, San Joaquin River, Sacramento River and its tributaries, as well as in the Delta -- important components to California's water future.